lating to nationality, age, educational qualification, residence, income, multiple dealership norms, etc. Selection of the dealers/distributors from amongst the eligible candidates is made by duly constituted Dealer Selection Boards. The selection process is already on.

(c) Does not arise.

Space Programmes for Rural Upliftment

*356. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are utilising the Space programme for rural upliftment;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) to which regions this programme is being beamed at present; and

(d) what has been the response of the people thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government is using Satellite TV transmission for rural development.

(b) The Department of Space in coordination with Ministry of Rural Development and the State Government of Madhya Pradesh is conducting a Project called Jhabua Development Communication Project (JDCP). This project is providing development programmes through Satellite Television to the tribal villages in Jhabua District in M.P.

(c) This Programme is presently being beamed to the villages in Jhabua District of Madhya Pradesh.

(d) Response studies show that there is perceptible knowledge increase among the people.

Sardar Sarovar Dam

*357. SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state that keeping in view the reference to the Cauvery Accord as a precedent and reference in the President's address what are the initiatives Government propose to take for the Sardar Sarovar Dam reaching a stage when water will be diverted to the Main Canal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL): Although the matter is subjudice, efforts are on for arriving at an amicable solution within the framework of the Award of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal.

Oil Import Bill

*358. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country's Oil import bill of Rs. 35,280 crores is likely to come down to Rs. 26,000 crores due to a fall in international prices and drop in demand due to a lower growth rate in this sector; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons that Government are not passing on this benefit to the public?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY): (a) The oil import bill depends upon the consumption, quantum of imports, and prevailing prices from time to time. The outgo on imports is now expected to be US $6451.9 million as against an original projection in the Oil Economy Budget (1998-99) of US $8418.10 million.

(b) The Government had decided to dismantle the Administered price Mechanism in the petroleum sector in phases. Consequently, oil companies have been allowed to fix the prices based on

market consideration effective from 1.4.98 for all petroleum products other than MS, SKO(PDS), LPG, HSD and ATF. Prices of HSD is fixed on import parity basis and the benefit of decline in international prices has been passed on to the Indian consumers.

Smooth functioning of Bombay High

*359. SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the Asian Age, dated the 2nd October, 1998, captioned 'Minister ignores P.M.'s order';

(b) if so, the facts of the case; and

(c) the steps taken to ensure smooth functioning of Bombay High?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On the recommendations of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on 15th December, 1997, the Ministry of Civil Aviation granted permission to ONGC to hire three Bell—412 helicopters from M/s. Azal for providing helicopter services for carriage of men and material related to the Bombay High offshore operations under foreign registration initially for a period of three months with the condition that the helicopters would be got registered in India and operated in conformity with the domestic air transport policy. On the request of ONGC, permission was extended from time to time till 1st September, 1998.

In the mean time M/s. Azal India Pvt. Ltd. (an Indian company) was granted NOC on 6th November, 1998 to operate non-scheduled air services. Import permission for three Bell-412 HP (2+13 seater) helicopters was issued on 1st December, 1998.

(c) In order to meet its operational requirements for offshore activities, ONGC hires helicopter services from various vendors like M/s Pawan Hans Helicopters Ltd. (PHHL) and other Indian operators M/s. Azal India Pvt. Ltd has also started flying with effect from 1.1.1999. M/s. PHHL and other Indian registered helicopter operators are fully equipped to provide necessary services to ONGC.

Report on Radioactive Pollution at Jaduguda

*360. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether prevalence of disease caused by Radioactive pollution at Jaduguda by uranium mines owned by Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. has been brought to the notice of Central Government by the Government of Bihar; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard and the action taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) No, Sir. However, a copy of the report of a Committee of the Bihar State Legislative Council on the alleged radioactive pollution at Jaduguda on account of the operations of the Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. (UCIL), a public sector undertaking under the administrative control of the Department of Atomic Energy, was made available by the Secretary of the said Council to the management of UCIL.

(b) After a visit to Jaduguda, discussions with the local officers of UCIL as well as discussions with/reports of the officers concerned of the State Government, including State Government doctors and the State Director General of Health Services and others, the